

Message Text

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WARNING NOTICE SENSITIVE SOURCES AND METHODS INVOLVED NOT
RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS--NOT RELEASABLE TO
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1. LEBANON. ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN NO HEAVY FIGHTING IN
BEIRUT SINCE FRIDAY, TENSION REMAINS HIGH. SYRIAN TROOPS
REINFORCED THEIR POSITIONS AROUND THE PALESTINIAN CAMPS
OVER THE WEEKEND. WE BELIEVE THAT DURING THE NEXT
SEVERAL DAYS THESE FORCES, WITH THE AGREEMENT OF THE
QUADRIpartite COMMITTEE AS WELL AS SARKIS, WILL COLLECT
HEAVY WEAPONS FROM THE PALESTINIANS. SOME CLASHES
COULD RESULT. THE MAINLINE PALESTINIANS, HOWEVER, APPEAR
DETERMINED NOT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN A DISASTROUS CON-
FRONTATION WITH THE SYRIANS. CONSEQUENTLY, THE REJECTION-
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ISTS ARE UNLIKELY TO RECEIVE MUCH ASSISTANCE IF THEY CHOOSE
TO OPPOSE THE SYRIANS.

2. ISRAELI LEADERS, INCLUDING RABIN, PERES AND ALLON
HAVE NOTED THAT THE SYRIANS WERE WITHDRAWING FROM SOUTHERN
LEBANON. RABIN SAID FOLLOWING THE WEEKLY SUNDAY CABINET
MEETING THAT ISRAELI PRESSURE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS

DECISION. HE SAID THAT ;F ISRAEL HAD NOT STOOD FIRM, THE US WOULD HAVE SETTLED FOR LESS MOVEMENT ON THE GROUND. THE SYRIANS FORCES WERE NOT A REAL THREAT, RATHER THE INCIDENT WAS A TEST OF ISRAEL'S CREDIBILITY. THIS CREDIBILITY, ACCORDING TO RABIN, HAS EMERGED ENHANCED FROM THE AFFAIR. RABIN ALSO NOTED THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE NOT TOTALLY WITHDRAWN FROM POSITIONS OCCUPIED IN LATE JANUARY AND THIS WOULD BE DISCUSSED ;WITH THE SECRETARY.

3. ALLON SUGGESTED TO A MAARIV CORRESPONDENT THAT THE LEBANESE SHOULD NEGOTIATE AND SIGN AN AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL. THIS AGREEMENT COULD AVOID FUTURE MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND INTRODUCE A SYSTEM WHICH WOULD RELAX BORDER TENSION. HE NOTED THAT SUCH AN AGREEMENT WOULD DEPEND TO NO SMALL EXTENT ON SYRIAN CONSENT.

4. ACCORDING TO AP, THE QUADRIPARTITE SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE ANNOUNCED FOLLOWING A SATURDAY SESSION THAT AN AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 1969 CAIRO ACCORDS, WHICH DEFINE THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON. THE NEW AGREEMENT REPORTEDLY:

--ALLOWS ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER OF LIGHT ARMS IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS;

--RESTRICTS THE NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON TO THOSE REGISTERED WITH UNRWA, MEANING SOME 150,000 PALESTINIANS WOULD BE FORCED TO LEAVE;

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--BANS PALESTINIAN RADIO BROADCASTS AND REQUIRES AUTHORIZATION FOR RALLIES AND DEMONSTRATIONS. (SECRET)

5. ISRAEL. EMBASSY TEL AVIV REPORTS THAT MOST OBSERVERS CONSIDER THE RABIN-PERES CONTEST STILL VERY CLOSE. A FEW OBSERVERS, HOWEVER, ARE VENTURING HESITANT GUESSES. LIKUD LEADER BEGIN TOLD THE CHARGE THAT HE THOUGHT RABIN WAS PROBABLY A LITTLE AHEAD. BEGIN SAID HE THOUGHT THE LIKUD WOULD DO BETTER IN THE ELECTION AGAINST A LABOR PARTY LED BY RABIN THAN AGAINST ONE LED BY PERES.

6. JERUSALEM RADIO REPORTED THAT STUDENTS IN NABLUS HAD DEMONSTRATED OVER THE WEEKEND. ISRAELI SECURITY FORCES WERE CALLED IN TO QUELL THE DISTURBANCES. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

7. EGYPT. THE EGYPTIAN NEWSPAPER AL-GUMHURIYYA CAPRIED A LONG ARTICLE, WHICH EMBASSY CAIRO BELIEVES IS CLEARLY INSPIRED BY FAHMY, DETAILING THE EGYPTIAN NEGOTIATING

POSITION IN LIGHT OF WALDHEIM'S CURRENT MIDDLE EAST TRIP AND THE VISIT OF SOVIET OFFICIAL SYTENKO. THE ARTICLE MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

--FAILURE TO RESUME MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS MEANS A NEW WAR;

--A GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE IS NOT THE ONLY POSSIBLE CHANNEL FOR NEGOTIATIONS AND OTHER PROPOSALS ARE BEING DISCUSSED;

--ARAB LEADERS AGREE THAT THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION SHOULD BE RESOLVED FIRST;

--ARAFAT HAS GIVEN ASSURANCES THAT THE PLO IS READY TO ATTEND; AND

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--FAHMY PRESENTED WALDHEIM WITH SEVERAL "PROCEDURAL PROPOSALS."

8. THE ARTICLE SAYS THAT THE EGYPTIAN POSITION IS THAT, SHOULD A TWO STAGE PEACE CONFERENCE BE AGREED UPON, ALL PARTIES MUST AGREE IN ADVANCE THAT THE PLO BE INVITED TO ATTEND THE SECOND STAGE. AS ALTERNATIVES TO A GENEVA CONFERENCE, THE ARTICLE SUGGESTED THAT EITHER WALDHEIM SHOULD PERSONALLY UNDERTAKE MEDIATION BETWEEN THE PARTIES OR THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL SHOULD BECOME THE NEGOTIATING FORUM.

9. EGYPTIAN UNIVERSITIES REOPENED FEBRUARY 11 AFTER CLOSING EARLY FOR MID-YEAR RECESS DURING LAST MONTHS RIOTS. THE CAIRO DAILY AL-AHRAM REPORTED THAT STUDENTS DEMONSTRATED AT CAIRO UNIVERSITY FOR THE PAST THREE DAYS. EMBASSY CAIRO COMMENTED THAT RUMORS ABOUT THAT TROUBLE MAY ALSO BE BREWING AT AIN SHAMS UNIVERSITY WHERE EXAMS DO NOT BEGIN FOR ANOTHER WEEK.

10. THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED FEBRUARY 11 THAT THE VOTERS HAD OVERWHELMINGLY APPROVED SADAT'S SECURITY TAX MEASURES IN LAST WEEK'S REFERENDUM. THE VOTE WAS 99.42 PERCENT IN FAVOR, ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL COUNT. HOWEVER, EMBASSY CAIRO COMMENTED THAT THIS FIGURE SEEMED HIGHLY INFLATED AND DID NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE GOVERNMENT RIGGED THE BALLOT BOXES.

11. IN THE VIEW OF A SOURCE OF OUR CAIRO DEFENSE ATTACHE, THE EGYPTIAN ARMED FORCES HAVE DETERIORATED TO THE POINT WHERE THE ONLY MISSION THAT THEY CAN

ACCOMPLISH IS THE DEFENSE OF THE SADAT REGIME. DUE TO THE LACK OF SPARE PARTS AND NEW EQUIPMENT, THE SOURCE BELIEVES THAT THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY CANNOT WITHSTAND AN ISRAELI ATTACK. (SECRET/NOFORN)

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12. SYRIA. EMBASSY DAMASCUS NOTED THE FOLLOWING INCIDENTS AS EVIDENCE OF CONTINUED INTERNAL STRAINS IN SYRIA:

--16 OFFICERS OF RIFAT ASAD'S DEFENSE COMPANIES, THE REGIME'S PRAETORIAN GUARD, WERE ARRESTED RECENTLY FOR ANTI-REGIME ACTIVITIES, THE FIRST REPORT OF SUCH ACTIVITY IN THE LOYAL CORPS;

--A RECENT SPATE OF BOMBINGS IN SEVERAL SYRIAN CITIES, PARTICULARLY ALEPPO,

--THE APPARENT ASSASSINATION OF THE INTERIOR MINISTER'S DRIVER.

13. DAMASCUS RADIO ANNOUNCED THAT ASAD WOULD VISIT ROMANIA FEBRUARY 15 AND 16, AT THE INVITATION OF ROMANIAN PRESIDENT CEAUSESCU. (CONFIDENTIAL)

14. PALESTINIANS. ACCORDING TO THE SYRIAN PRESS, A PLO PREPARATORY COMMITTEE HAD DECIDED TO EXPAND THE PNC TO 271 MEMBERS FROM THE CURRENT 180. THIS EXPANSION IS CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN THE SYRIANS HAD HOPED FOR. EMBASSY DAMASCUS COMMENTS THAT ARAFAT APPEARS TO HAVE SUCCESSFULLY BLUNTED ATTEMPTS TO DILUTE THE STRENGTH OF THE FEDAYEEN IN THE PNC AND TO HAVE WEATHERED ANOTHER LEADERSHIP CRISIS IN THE PLO.

15. IN A CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBASSY CAIRO OFFICER, FAHMY'S OFFICE DIRECTOR, AL-BAZ, COMMENTED THAT HE IS WORRIED THE UPCOMING PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL SESSION (MARCH 12) IS LIKELY TO RESULT IN "EVASIVE, MEANINGLESS RHETORIC," RATHER THAN ANY SUBSTANTIVE POLICIES. IF THE PNC DOES END IN A RESOLUTION OFFERING TO PARTICIPATE AT GENEVA, HOWEVER, AL-BAZ CONCLUDED THAT IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR EGYPT TO ATTEND WITHOUT THE PALESTINIANS. (SECRET)

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16. OPEC. THE SAUDIS ARE STICKING TO THEIR INTENT TO EXPAND OIL PRODUCTION SHARPLY IN AN EFFORT TO UNDERMINE THE 10-PERCENT PRICE INCREASE AGREED TO BY 11 OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES. A FEW DAYS AGO CROWN PRINCE FAHD REJECTED OUTRIGHT A COMPROMISE SUGGESTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF OPEC UNDER WHICH THE SAUDIS WOULD ACCEPT THE 10-PERCENT PRICE HIKE NOW IN RETURN FOR CANCELLATION OF THE ADDITIONAL 5-PERCENT INCREASE SCHEDULED FOR JULY. THE SAUDIS SAY THEY WILL NOT BUDGE FROM THEIR PRESENT PRICE, AND THEY CONSIDER THE JULY INCREASE ALREADY A DEAD ISSUE. (SECRET/NFORN/NOCONTRACT)
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